

# Gandung Sewu Festival: The Eroded Image of the Blambangan People's Heroism

Mohammad Isfironi

Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta

Email: [moh.isfironi@gmail.com](mailto:moh.isfironi@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** Since it was first held in 2012, the Gandrung Sewu Festival has become a favorite in the Banyuwangi Festival event. Through ethnographic techniques, the popularity of Gandrung Sewu appears not only because the show is aesthetically appealing, but in the show, it holds the stories and desires of the people of Banyuwangi. With the theory of desire as conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari, it can be seen that the creative power creates the reality of the life of the Banyuwangi people. Through the expression of this desire, the history of the heroism of the Blambangan people can be revealed, which became the background for the emergence of Gandrung and later became an art performance called the Gandrung Sewu Festival. This paper is based on field notes from observations of the Gandrung Sewu Festival and in-depth interviews with resource persons who have competence and relevance. The results of the study show that Gandrung Sewu is not only an art performance created from Gandrung, which has become one of the icons of Banyuwangi's arts and culture but also an image of the heroism of the Blambangan people in a war against foreign domination in the past, the Heroism of the Bayu War unites The people of Blambangan. They were scattered again in a new spirit marked by the birth of Banyuwangi. The heroism of the people of Blambangan, which continues to be loved by the people of Banyuwangi, continues to be eroded into various purely aesthetic artistic creativity in order to serve the demand for the tourism market, which continues to squirm, especially in the era of Regent Abdullah Azwar Anas' leadership in 2010-2020.

**Keywords:** Banyuwangi Festival, Blambangan, Image of Heroism, Aesthetics of Gandrung Sewu.

## Gandung Sewu Festival

### Introduction

The study of Banyuwangi from various perspectives is still fascinating. Several dissertations and scientific journals prove that Banyuwangi or Blambangan has various attractions. The works of historians Sujana (2001), Samsibur (2011), and Margana (2012) can be seen as early works that reveal the fact that Blambangan is fundamental as a royal name, not a legend. The three works above refer to various previous works on Blambangan or Banyuwangi, such as works in the field of philology written by Brandes (1894), Pegeaud (1932), Kumar (1779), Darusuprta (1984), Wiarsi Arifin (1780). Blambangan has also attracted the attention of writers in the field of Customary Law as written by J.W. de Stoppelar (1927), also Atmosoedirdjo (1952), and Rato (2009).

The emergence of various works about Banyuwangi or Blambangan is encouraging because previously, the study of Banyuwangi, especially in the past, namely Blambangan, was neglected (ignored). In Indonesian National history books, Blambangan is not highlighted much, even though the role of the Blambangan Kingdom in opposing all kinds of domination and colonialism is quite crucial in Indonesian history. The work of Sujana (2001) and Margana (2012) encourages other researchers to be interested in taking Banyuwangi or Blambangan subjects from various disciplines. An ethnographic report of the indigenous people of Banyuwangi written by Andrew Beatty (1999) became an interesting anthropological work after Geertz's authoritative work on Javanese Religion (1960). Furthermore, Bernard Arps (2009), an ethnolinguistic expert, is interested in the language typically used by the people of Banyuwangi. Meanwhile, Novie Anoegrajekti (2010) is interested in the struggle of women performing traditional arts in Banyuwangi to continue to exist amid the power relations that surround them. Rachmi Diyah Larasati (2012; 2013) has also written about the plight of female dancers in Banyuwangi in the post-G30S event.

In addition to the works above, writers about Banyuwangi are more interested in the arts and culture developed in Banyuwangi. One of the most popular, which is then seen as a characteristic of Banyuwangi, is Gandrung. Currently, gandrung had developed far into a performing art compared to when it first appeared, which is an inseparable part of the history of the establishment of Banyuwangi. When the Regional Autonomy Law was implemented, tourism was generally a favorite program in every district in Indonesia in order to increase local revenue. In 2011, the Regent of Banyuwangi launched a massive promotion through the so-called Banyuwangi Festival. Various kinds of arts, cultures, and customs are displayed at the Banyuwangi Festival. One of the most favorites is the Gandrung Sewu performance. In the Setianto report (2019), the Gandrung Sewu performance has been held eight times and has always been successful in bringing in local and foreign tourists.

The attraction and popularity of Gandrung Sewu made it into the TOP 100 National Events (CoE WI) 2018, which was held in 18 leading tourism destinations. Through the festival, which has been held regularly since 2012, Banyuwangi has been named by the Minister of Tourism as the best festival organizer in Indonesia and has established the Banyuwangi branding. "The City of Carnival and Festival," or the city with many events of, carnivals and festivals. At that time, Gandrung Sewu passed the assessment of the curator

team because it had the advantages of three values of good performing art, namely: *Creativity, Cultural, and Commercial*, widely known as 3 C (<http://www.banyuwangibagus.com>). The branding with "The City of Carnival and Festival" is functional towards efforts to remove several negative stigmas, especially the term "city of witchcraft." Banyuwangi senior cultural observer Hasnan Singadimayan (90 years old) considers the Gandrung Sewu performance a strategic effort to save Gandrung art. However, this effort does not automatically eliminate Gandrung's negative stigma.

Previous writings about Gandrung generally see gandrung in two perspectives, namely: first, gandrung as a representation of Banyuwangi's distinctive arts and culture with all its knick-knacks (Anoegrajekti, 2006; Anoegrajekti, 2011; Sejati, 2012; Prasetya, et al., 2017; Finahari & Rubiyon, 2020). Furthermore, secondly, infatuation as a tourism commodity (Anoegrajekti et al., 2015; Suharti, 2012; Finahari. et al., 2019), This paper aims to describe how the Gandrung Sewu performance became the most attention-grabbing and favorite performance in the Banyuwangi Festival. What is the spirit that makes Gandrung Sewu get great support from the people of Banyuwangi? Is this related to the history of Banyuwangi in the past when it was still called Blambangan? Answering the questions above will reveal two things at once: first, how the Gandrung Sewu Festival became the main event in the Banyuwangi Festival. Second, is it true that the Gandrung Sewu Festival represents Gandrung which grew from the spirit of the formation of the city of Banyuwangi, replacing Blambangan in the past?

To understand and explain what spirit drives the creativity of the Banyuwangi people's arts and culture, the concept of desire or proposed by Gilles Deleuz and Guattari (1972). For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not the logic of lack in the object's name as understood in the tradition of psychoanalytic philosophy, which tends to be destructive and damaging. On the other hand, it is the subject who loses desire because of being repressed, so the subject is also repressed (2000). Odiepan's tradition of psychoanalysis, which always looks for a basis from the past, is no longer logical because passionate desires and desires seem to seek substitution and representation alibis because they are seen as flaws by nature. However, desire is a creative force that creates reality. This desire makes the people of Banyuwangi always find new passions so that new art-cultural genres can be created that are constantly changing. However, there is a commodification pull from the tourism market towards Gandrung, but the passion makes Gandrung continue to create creativity and even a new reality, namely Gandrung Sewu.

This research is qualitative and relies on primary and secondary data. Field studies obtained primary data to observe and map research aspects directly. The data needed concerns the form of the Blambangan people's heroism represented in the Gandrung Sewu performance. The factors that encourage creativity, especially the passion for the arts and culture of the Banyuwangi people, so that Gandrung can be maintained and reproduced following developments that tend to be guided by the tourism market. There are also observable implications for the existence of Gandrung, which was initially an expression of the Banyuwangi people's love for the heroism of the Blambangan people in facing foreign domination on Blambangan land in the past.

This study involved three parties in data collection: the actors who were directly involved in the Gandrung Sewu performance, the Cultural, and the general public. The three parties will be involved to reveal how the people of Banyuwangi live with a passion for art and culture creatively as part of their daily life and whether this creature is more of a response to the demand for the tourism market, which the Banyuwangi Regional Government is promoting. In addition, figures were also involved in evaluating the accuracy and validity of the research.

This research process took place in 2019 with three months of data collection, from desk review, field observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. Before field research, secondary materials, including online news, were collected to describe various situations related to the Gandrung Sewu performance. Observations were made at several events, primarily when the Gandrung Sewu Festival was held and other related events that could be observed directly. Interviews were conducted at each informant's place after obtaining prior approval.

Data analysis was carried out in two forms. First, data processing follows the stages of Huberman (2000). This stage starts with reducing observation and interview data, displaying data in the form of a summary and synopsis based on the themes of field findings and data verification for the conclusion process. Second, the analysis used follows an interpretation technique that starts with "restatement" of the data found both from observations and interviews, followed by "description" to determine the pattern or trend of the data ending with "interpretation" to reveal the meaning of the data that has been collected.

### **Gandrung Sewu History: Aesthetic War Heroism**

The Gandrung Sewu performance for the first time was shown as part of the Banyuwangi Festival event in 2012. From then until 2019, when this research was conducted consistently, the Gandrung Sewu event had entered its eighth year (Setianto, 2019). This eighth-year performance carries the theme Banner of Sunangkoro. This theme depicts the heroism of the Blambangan people's struggle against the Dutch Company. The war, known as the Bayu War, is believed to have started on December 18, 1771. On the part of the Blambangan people, this war was led by Susuhunan Jagapati, referred to in Dutch sources as Pseudo-Wilis or False Wilis (Margana, 2012: 159). The Blambangan people's resistance was extinguished after Jagapati was injured and died on June 11, 1773 (Margana, 2012: 180). This incident made an impression on the hearts of the people of Blambangan, so that later December 18 was designated as the anniversary of the City of Banyuwangi.

As a colossal performance, Gandrung presents an attraction of dance, music, Banyuwangenan music, and choreography that tells the story according to the chosen theme. Like in the 2019 show, the theme carried since 2012 has always been inspired by legends and stories as well as history, Banyuwangi. If in 2019 the theme was Sunangkoro Banners, in the previous year, 2018, it was the Kemendung Kite. In 2017 the theme chosen was Flower Pepe. Furthermore, in 2016, they took the theme of Seblang Lukinto, a continuation of the 2015 theme of Seblang Sewu, namely Padha Watch (Elvin Hendrata, 2019).

Gandrung Sewu is a manifestation of the consistency of artists in Banyuwangi who have continued to cultivate creative power in their work throughout its history. As creativity, Gandrung Sewu emerged at the reformation stage of the so-called cultural movement in Banyuwangi. Cultural arts creativity in Banyuwangi Regency in the first stage, namely the old order era, produced various creativity, dance, song, and music. Until one day, at the end of the reign of the Old Order, a political tragedy, the G30S changed everything. Various works of art are seen as contributing and labeled as part of the communist movement in Indonesia. The accused artists were arrested so that artistic and cultural creativity stagnated because of a fear of being associated with rebel groups. One of the most famous is the work of the artist Moh. Arief composed the song "Genjèr-genjèr." The popularity of the song "Genjèr-genjèr" reached the national stage, so it was used by one of the political parties at that time, namely the PKI, to boost its popularity so that in

the 1955 election, it was able to enter the top five political parties that controlled the parliament.

The G30S incident became the cause of the stigma against some works of art and artists as a political tool of communism in Banyuwangi, especially after the power was entirely in the hands of the New Order Government. Slamet Menur (70 years), a regional dance choreographer and Banyuwangi angklung maestro, also felt this stigma who at that time lived in the Banyuwangi city area and had to flee to a village because there was a feeling of fear, especially after Moh. Arief was arrested, and his fate has not been traced to this day. This condition is also described by Larasati (2013) in his book "The Dance makes you Vanish: Cultural Reconstruction in Post-Genocide Indonesia." Larasati convincingly illustrates how the New Order instilled a bad image on the bodies of dancers identified as supporters of the left movement.

Strict control makes all elements of art and culture traumatized. The supervisory mechanism by the New Order regime put pressure on the development of arts and culture (Setiawan, 2010: Soedarsono, 2010: 99-104). The New Order government through the Regents who were generally from the army, including the Regent of Banyuwangi tried to control the creative activities of artists, especially who allegedly in the previous era were members or sympathizers of the Lekra (People's Arts Institute) affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party. Because the Banyuwangi Regent concluded and considered artists as important cultural assets for the New Order, a policy was taken to involve them in being part of the New Order's politics with art-cultural rhetoric as a development propaganda tool that was previously stigmatized as a banned party political propaganda tool.

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propaganda tool that was previously stigmatized as a banned party political propaganda tool.

On May 19, 1970, Regent Joko Supa'at Slamet issued a decree numbered: Um/1698/50, which regulates the existence of regional arts. This decree is the second era of the cultural movement in Banyuwangi. Armed with this decree, Pak Pa'at (Regent Joko Supa'at Slamet's nickname) made an effort that was claimed to be saving the arts and culture of Banyuwangi by trying to reduce the negative stigma of various Banyuwangi arts and cultures. At that time, Pak Pa'at forbade Gandrung and his accompanying panjak from "singing" around the village. For that, Pak Pa'at formed a special team that was given the task of hunting down the Gandrung buskers. Pak Pa'at also made strict rules for visitors to the Gandrung show so that it would no longer be an arena for drunkenness and the circulation of alcoholic beverages. Members of the TNI-Polri will detain violators of this provision. Efforts to revive the popularity of Gandrung art, according to Soemitro Hadi (Setianto, 2019: 10), continued until the H.T. Purnomo Sidik, Regent of Syamsul, even until the era of Regent Anas in 2000-2010.

On the artist side, to overcome the negative stigma of Gandrung, a senior choreographer, Soemitro Hadi, tried to be creative by creating dance compositions taken from Gandrung's dance movement called Jéjér Gandrung. Efforts to attract the Gandrung aesthetic into the art of Jéjér Gandrung dance encourage the younger generation to be interested in and love Gandrung dance. Since 1974, the Jéjér Gandrung dance has become known to the general public as a social and welcoming dance. Gandrung, which used to be known as an all-night show, has turned into part of an event held by both the general public and the local government. It is introduced to guests as a typical Banyuwangi dance art and is even claimed to be part of the Banyuwangi Cultural identity.

Because the Jéjér Gandrung dance still bears the name Gandrung, the image of Gandrung's heroism also remains attached to the Jéjér Gandrung dance. When Regent Abdullah Azwar Anas 2011 launched a tourism promotion entitled Banyuwangi Festival (Bfest), Gandrung was chosen as a dance offered in the tourism market and the main mascot of the Banyuwangi Festival (Setianto, 2019: 15).

To meet the demands of holding the Banyuwangi Festival, the artists who are members of the Banyuwangi Dance Trainers and Artists Association (PATIH SENOWANGI) were encouraged to create a colossal dance composition called Gandrung Sewu. The word Sewu here refers to the number of dancers in the thousands. At the 2019

performance, Gandrung Sewu was played by 1,400 teenage dancers and children. Gandrung Sewu performed in the form of a colossal dance ballet on a stretch of sand at Marina Boom Beach. Gandrung Sewu performances always carry changing themes but still have the same nuance, namely heroism but in an aesthetic form.

The theme of heroism can be accepted and continues to be echoed for two reasons: first, the theme of heroism follows the narrative of local historians about Banyuwangi's past, namely the heroic people of Blambangan. Second, the heroism narrative appears "in line" with the militaristic New Order platform. The New Order's aggressive style was comfortable with the heroism narrative highlighted in Banyuwangi's history. These two reasons are relevant to the New Order's goal of making art and culture an instrument of development propaganda and paralleling the heroic spirit of the Banyuwangi people, who want to continue to inherit the heroism of their ancestors in the face of external domination or colonialism.

Bernard Arps (2009), while conducting research in Banyuwangi, saw that the traces of the heroic character of the Blambangan people can still be seen in the heroic tendencies of the people of Banyuwangi. In Arps' observation, this character appears in the public space as a lively discourse or discursive ambiance when there is a process of forming local cultural identity in Banyuwangi through the practice of using the Banyuwangen/Osing language. Arps pays less attention to the enthusiasm of the Banyuwangi people when talking about its history and culture. However, because language is the main identity-forming element, Arps' observations are relevant to the theme of this research.

What Arps observed was increasingly gaining momentum when Banyuwangi Regency promoted tourism through the Banyuwangi Festival event. Various cultural expressions such as language, art, and customs adapted to the demand for pragmatic choices in the tourism market. All expressions of art, culture, and customs must be adapted to the needs of the tourism market offered in the Banyuwangi Festival. No exception, the history of Banyuwangi, a source of inspiration and passion for the arts of the Banyuwangi people, must also be displayed in an aesthetic form. In this context, the actual performance of Gandrung Sewu is an aesthetic of the heroic history of the Blambangan people, which the people of Banyuwangi inherited as an inspiration and spirit that inspires artistic and cultural desires so that it is timeless.



### **Gandrung Sewu: The Eroded Image of Heroism**

The location of the Gandrung Sewu performance that was chosen was on a stretch of sand at Marina Boom Beach. This area was formerly known as the People's Amusement Park (THR). For the Festival organizers, this location was selected because, from Marina Boom Beach, visitors will get two beautiful views at once. First, to the east, you will be able to enjoy the beauty of the Bali strait, where the water does not appear to have big waves but smooth ripples that become even more beautiful when the moonlight hits it at night; local terms called *kinclong-kinclong koyo koco*. Second, visitors can enjoy a view that is no less beautiful to the west, namely the range of Mount Ranti, Mount Ijen, and Mount Raung. From the visitor's point of view, choosing the location of Boom Beach will bring them to the romance of the past because it has been known as a favorite tourist spot. The beauty of this beach has inspired artists to produce the dance composition "Padang Ulan" and the song "Padang Ulan," famous in Banyuwangi.

The dance and song "Padang Ulan" tells the story of the joy of young people enjoying the night during the full moon. Families and children happily played on the soft black sand while enjoying the sparkling waves in the Bali strait that sparkled in the moonlight. In addition, for some Banyuwangi people, Boom Beach is part of Banyuwangi's identity, so the leaders of various communities in Banyuwangi have proposed changing the name of the Bali strait to the Blambangan strait (Radar Banyuwangi, March 13, 2016). After P.T. Pelindo Properti manages, this area continues to develop into a tourism destination that complements various exciting landmarks. In this area, an amphitheater has also been built, which can be used for various arts and cultures to perform. As a result, the Marina Boom Beach area has turned into an Instagram-able tourism destination.

The beauty of the Marina Boom Beach area seems to embody what H. Suparman envisioned when he re-created Padang Ulan, which means more or less: When the full moon on the beach Boom Banyuwangi. The moonlight, like glass, hit the sparkling water. In the morning, young people come to the beach." This song is usually sung to accompany the dance, which is also called Padang Ulan Dance, which results from Pak's choreography. Slamet Menur. Mr. Slamet also choreographed the *Genjèr-genjèr* dance, whose famous song was composed by M. Arief. The fact as described above can be understood if the people of Banyuwangi have a positive perception towards and at the same time are proud when Gandrung Sewu is held at Marina Boom Beach. Marina Boom Beach is perceived by

most of the people of Banyuwangi as a monument to the expression of past romanticism, the exoticism of beautiful nature, and the overflow of life's desires.

Since the morning on the D day of the Gandrung Sewu performance, the atmosphere in the Banyuwangi City area, especially the roads leading to the event venue, has been filled with various banners and officers passing by to prepare the arena for the performance. The atmosphere was quite different from average days and seemed to have been seen the day before. It was busier than usual that day. In an elementary school located north of Blambangan Park, Kepatihan Elementary School, hundreds of young girls from elementary to high school are busy making up with Gandrung dancers with knick-knacks. Kang Ayong Laros (60 years old) said Gandrung is APIK (Brother, White, Ijo, Yellow). Due to the large number of dancers who will be performing, the deadline of three hours before the show starts seems relatively short. Long story short, euphoria always accompanies the performance of Gandrung Sewu. It is not surprising that those related to local cultural identity are always in a lively discourse which Bernard Arps (2009) referred to as discursive ambience.

The enthusiasm was also shown by Ayong Laros, one of the composers of Banyuwangen/Osing songs. Kang Ayong, a Sasak-blooded man who identifies himself more as Laré Osing, expressed his heroism in the theme of Sunangkoro's Panji-Panji in a poem called Panji Sunangkoro in Banyuwangen/Osing language in a written version composed by the GBOT (Gesah Banyuwangi Osing Tulen) community which he leads. The following is a poem about Panji Sunangkoro that Kang Ayong sent to the author via WhatsApp chat about how Gandrung Sewu is performing.

PANJI SUNANGKORO

*wis awe-awe*

*Lare-lare wis podho njegog*

*Njingkat ojo ono hang nyegah*

*Pusoko sampur gandrung semelewet ring saben-saben pelataran*

*Ring saben-saben dalan*

*Muntab nyapu ngerijigi Banyuwangi hang sak weran-weran*

*Lare cilik hang mage melik-melik*

*Prawan tanggung kang arume kembang Sritanjung....*

*Lan lancing pangon ngedeg jejeg hang akehe koyo tawon*

*Sumpahe....*

*Ojo sampik ono kang nguthik Banyuwangi...*

*Ojo sampik no hang ngerusak Banyuwangi...*

*Lan ojo sampik ono hang ngotori Banyuwangi...*

*Sun babat koy dene mbabat suket lalang...*

*Sun osir koyo butut ngusir penjajah  
Lan sun uncalaken koyo dene nguncalaken romot nyang lebu  
Banyuwangi kudu tetap wangi njogo Bumi Pertiwi.  
Banyuwangi, 10 Oktober 2019  
Karya Ayong Laros.*

The translation is rough as follows:

"Panji Sunangkoro"

Called

The kids are awake

'hope' (stand up spontaneously and be alert) nothing gets in the way

The heirloom of thousands of infatuation scarves flashed

In Every Way

Spontaneously clean up the vast Banyuwangi

Little children who are still children

A young girl who should be like a Sritanjung flower

Muga youths standing tall who are as numerous as wasps

I swear

Do not let anyone disturb Banyuwangi

Do not let anyone damage Banyuwangi

And do not let anyone pollute Banyuwangi

I trip like I trip weeds

I chased away like the elders expelled the Dutch

And I throw it like throwing trash in its place

Banyuwangi must always smell good to be the motherland.

That afternoon, Sunday, October 12, 2019, at 13.00 WIB, the performance began. The hot afternoon did not dampen the audience's enthusiasm around the arena. Immediately after the ceremonial welcoming ceremony ended, it could be seen from the VIP audience's tent that thousands of dancers from the shoreline danced with a choreography that matched the agility of movement, and the smile continued to grow. The stomping rhythm of the music and the graceful strains of the gending accompanies 1,400 young dancers in Gandrung costumes, complete with a shiny omprog (crown) and a fiery red scarf. The dance movements and formations of dancers alternated in various variations, with the fan in hand being shaken to the rhythm of the gending, which was greeted by thunderous applause from thousands of spectators and hundreds of camera flashes. The dancers are students at various levels of elementary, junior high, and high school / vocational school cheerfully for approximately one and a half hours demonstrating the dance horns in a beautiful choreographic formation following the storyline of the Blambangan people's heroism under the banner of Sunangkoro.

The previous year's Gandrung Sewu performance with the Kumendung Screen theme was no less heroic. Layar Kumendung tells the story of the struggle and death of the first Banyuwangi Regent, Raden Tumenggung Wiraguna or known as Mas Alit. It is said that Mas Alit had to go to Semarang to fulfill the call of the VOC officials by boarding a Dutch-flagged ship. On the way, while crossing the area between Tuban and Lasem, in Sedayu Gresik, Mas Alit's ship was attacked by pirates. It is strongly suspected that the pirates were under the VOC's orders. From this incident, it can be seen that the Dutch did not fully trust Mas Alit and were considered to have the potential to lead his people into rebellion. The sadness of the Banyuwangi people when escorting Mas Alit was made into one of the fragments that were staged in Gandrung Sewu in 2018. The sadness is described as not making the people of Banyuwangi stop fighting. They passed Mas Alit's fighting spirit to young people, which is depicted in the fragment of the elders teaching the gandrung dance to the younger generation.

It is making gandrung as a means to perpetuate the heroism of the Blambangan people as a product of unlimited artistic creativity; even though it is driven by the necessity to adapt to the logic of tourism, aesthetics risks eroding the spirit of heroism which is the reason for the emergence of Gandrung. Therefore Gandrung Sewu is not Gandrung. So what really should be maintained and cared for? When Regent Samsul Hadi established the Gandrung school through the "Jenggirat Tangi" policy, it was not making all students into gandrung dancers but so that the gandrung spirit became an inspiration for every young generation. Performing the gandrung dance becomes more interesting by presenting the Jéjér Gandrung and Gandrung Sewu dances is the first tactical step to capturing the spirit of Gandrung.

### **Gandrung Sewu Performance: Between Conservation and Commodification**

The presence of art in society is seen as beauty, pleasure, a means of communication, a symbol system, and a superorganic reality (Yadi, 2007: 12-26). Through art, you can also gain insight into the world of culture and provide clues about kinship, gender, religion, political ideas, and historical memory. Performing arts have political, social, and economic dimensions (Soedarsono, 2011). In the context of society, art can function to display social status, social identity, and political power (Haviland., at. al, 2008: 337-338). Gandrung Sewu, as described in the previous section, has a connection with the real life of the Banyuwangi people throughout its history.

Gandrung Sewu initially functioned as a medium of communication among the people of Blambangan, who were scattered due to the Bayu War. Then it developed into an art performance that explores the beauty that is liked or loved. Besides the fact that his birth cannot be separated from the history of Banyuwangi's birth, Gandrung is also a symbol system that describes the desires and rhythms of the Banyuwangi people's life. As an integral part of the socio-cultural reality of the Banyuwangi people, it cannot only be seen as something concrete organically but a symbolic cultural meaning, namely abstract and intangible ideas and ideas behind all its activities and artifacts.

With the fact that Gandrung's problem is not just a matter of dance. Since the Government of Djoko Supaat Slamet (1966-1978), Banyuwangi regional arts, including Gandrung, have received attention to be preserved. This is where the idea of conservation emerged, marked by the publication of various local government policies in which various local arts need to be monitored and developed. Another reason is to follow the general narrative about a global culture that tends to be preferred by the younger generation. Social media is also often cited as a scapegoat for the gap between the younger generation and their culture. Pak Pa'at's policy continued and continued to be developed by his successor, Regents, until the reign of Regent Anas (2010-2020). Regent Ipuk, who incidentally is the wife of Regent Anas, the cultural policy taken also seems to follow the path that her husband has passed.

Currently, the movement of the people of Banyuwangi's daily life depicts a passion for art and culture. The name Gandrung City is straightforward to get evidence for because the Gandrung statue will soon be found as soon as it enters the Banyuwangi Regency area. From the north, the gandrung statue can be found at the entrance of the Bajulmati dam, even though administratively, it is in the Situbondo district. The songs sung in the Banyuwangen/Osing language also filled the listening room for an F.M. radio tune-in at one of the radio stations in Banyuwangi. The nuances of Banyuwangen/Osing can be felt more and more when the events scheduled in the Banyuwangi Festival are approaching the day of their implementation. The Gandrung Sewu Festival is the one that gets the most attention from the audience, so its presence is most eagerly awaited.

Compared to other regional dances, Gandrung seems to be transforming. The transformation peaked when the Banyuwangi Regency Government celebrated all arts, culture, and customs during the Banyuwangi Festival event. The efforts made by Regent

Anas are generally understandable by actors and observers of arts, culture, and customs in Banyuwangi. There are two strategic interests obtained from the Banyuwangi Festival event. Efforts to conserve arts, culture, and customs on the one hand and the needs of the tourism market demand on the other. In Hasnan Singadimayan's view (Interview, November 2018), the strategic value is to educate the infatuated dancers, not vice versa, to make the students infatuated. City youth cannot be forced to become Gandrung, Barong, Kebo-keboan, or Seblang. However, the perpetrators of Gandrung, Kebo-keboan, and Seblang were drawn to be celebrities in all Banyuwangi Festival events.

Other figures and artists, such as the Banyuwangi painting maestro, Mozes Misdi, in his opening remarks of *Exhibition Painting, Sculpture, and Photography at the Wanti Building* on November 3, 2019, welcomed Mr. Anas' promise to build a special place for artists and culturalists to display their creations. Misdi, "If we dream of a place of culture, cultural development in Banyuwangi, want there to be infatuation, what is it like or if there is a festival, there is already a building." It is different with Azis, a palette painter from Misdi's student, who sees Pak Anas more realistically. Mr. Azis is not sure because what Mr. Anas said is just marketing, "artists and culturalists do not expect too much," he continued. The same thing was also conveyed by Slamet Sugiono, an artist who is also the chairman of the exhibition committee, that the most important thing is how the Regional Government can bridge the existence of a concrete partnership between arts and culture actors and tourism business actors by listening more to what is really what the actors of the art want.

In his remarks at the opening ceremony of Gandrung Sewu 2019, Mr. Anas acknowledged that efforts to commercialize Banyuwangi's cultural arts must also be balanced with conservation. The two cannot be separated. Even financially, the Regional Government cannot hold the Gandrung Sewu event if there is no support from the entire Banyuwangi community. Clearly, in the hot sun at Marina Boom Beach, Anas said:

"...gandrung sewu is one of the many events held by the local government. We need to thank all the people of Banyuwangi because gandrung sewu rose from the people by the people and for the people. The budget should be around five to six billion, which must be budgeted because the participants were not one thousand but fourteen hundred people who joined the dance on this occasion. Nevertheless, the local government only

budgeted about eight hundred as well. The rest are self-financing, people's self-help, and the community in Banyuwangi Regency who appear on this occasion...."

Referring to the amount of budget needed and the fact that the local government can fulfill it, it is clear that the local government's focus is on the facilitator's function and taking advantage of the artistic and cultural passion of the Banyuwangi people. That all forms of performing arts cost money to present is expected. From a management point of view, the source of funds must be ascertained from the required production costs. However, the emphasis here is that the implementation of Gandrung Sewu, the position of the community as communal support, appears to be more dominant than the government's support as government support. Support from the community will not be obtained except that the community does not have the spirit and passion for art, culture, and customs inherent in their daily lives.

There are two sides that support each other: the people with passion and spirit on the one hand and the local government as government support on the other. Even if the local government's goal is to increase regional income, that goal is in a position where the results can also be felt by the arts and culture community in Banyuwangi. Although the commodification of arts and culture has the risk of turning artistic and cultural products into mere commodities, when the direction of commodification is still within reach of benefits for arts and culture actors, the commodification effort can become a conservation effort at the same time.

## **Conclusion**

This study found that Gandrung Sewu in the form of a colossal performance of dance ballet played by a thousand teenage dancers, students and children, dressed in Gandrung, which was dominated by bright red and yellow. With a distinctive crown called an omprog, they dance to a dynamic musical rhythm that combines traditional and modern musical instruments. Gandrung was born as a marker of the times when the Blambangan people had long been under foreign domination or colonization. At that time, Gandrung was the communication medium for the Blambangan people, who were scattered due to the Bayu War against foreign domination. When they want to rise again, all the spirit manifests in something later known as gandrung.

Gandrung Sewu is not Gandrung but is a passion or desire that never goes out of love for the ancestral land and the struggle of the ancestors to maintain a prosperous life in fertile land. Gandrung is a symbol of the life movement of the Banyuwangi people. Therefore commodification that generates financial benefits is only another gift for the Banyuwangi people for their love of art, culture, and customs. Art culture for the people of Banyuwangi is a part of their life. There is no festival; art and culture will continue to be an inseparable part of the life movement of the Banyuwangi people.

Therefore, the spirit of heroism does not necessarily disappear when Gandrung must continuously create its aesthetics to match the demands of the tourism market. In the Gandrung Sewu performance, the spirit of heroism has changed into an aesthetic form. It is incarnated in the figure of a teenage dancer, in which all movements throughout the performance represent the historical values of the entire Banyuwangi community called Gandrung. The central values of the Gandrung figure are heroic. Dance movements, song lyrics, and musical accompaniment are rhythms that describe the inner world of the Blambangan people inherited by the people of Banyuwangi.

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